

VERTIGO



# FABLES™

WILLINGHAM  
LEONARDI  
RANDALL  
RUSSELL  
CANNON  
FERN  
BACHS  
HUGHES



113 Mar '12  
suggested for  
mature readers  
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PRESENTING: A NUMBER OF COMPACT DRAMAS  
AND JAPES ABOUT LIFE AND ADVENTURE BACK...

# In Those Days

Bill Willingham Lee Loughridge Todd  
writer/creator colors (except Klein  
Joao Gregory where noted) letters  
Hoas Lockard Shelly Bond editor  
cover asst. ed.

FEATURING A HOST OF ARTISTS YOU'LL  
MEET IN THE PAGES TO COME,  
BEGINNING WITH THESE FINE FELLOWS,  
**Rick Leonardi, and Ron Randall,**  
WHO PROVIDE OUR INTRODUCTION.

IN THOSE DAYS TRAVELING  
PERFORMERS HAD MAGIC  
AS WELL AS ARTIFICE IN  
HAND TO HELP THEM  
CREATE THEIR STORIES.



I HEAR  
THE OPENING ACT  
GUY DOES GREAT  
IMPRESSIONS.



OKAY, I'M HERE  
TO INTRODUCE THE BIG  
SHOW, BUT FIRST, GIVE  
ME A PERSON! ANY  
PERSON AT ALL!

DO THAT  
LOCAL FOREST  
GIRL!

YEAH!  
DO ROSE  
RED!



GREAT!  
NOW GIVE ME A  
PROFESSION.

MAKE  
HER A DRAGON  
SLAYER!



PERFECT!  
NOW GIVE ME  
SOMETHING REALLY  
FUNNY TO SAY OR DO  
BEFORE WE RUN OUT  
OF TIME AND HAVE TO  
START THE REAL  
SHOW!

PERHAPS  
WE'D BEST  
JUST BEGIN.



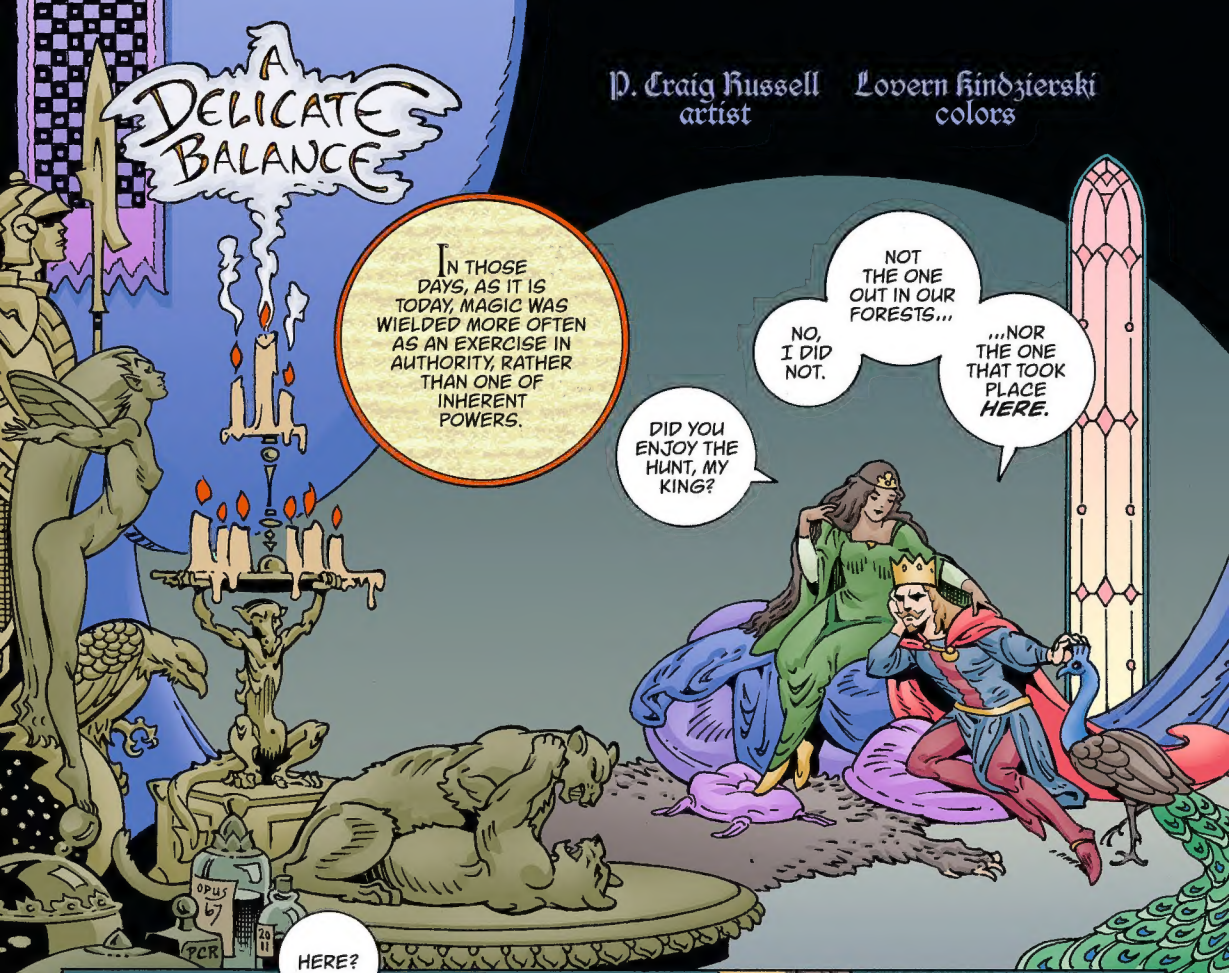
# DELICATE BALANCE

IN THOSE DAYS, AS IT IS TODAY, MAGIC WAS WIELDED MORE OFTEN AS AN EXERCISE IN AUTHORITY, RATHER THAN ONE OF INHERENT POWERS.

DID YOU ENJOY THE HUNT, MY KING?

NO, I DID NOT.

NOT THE ONE OUT IN OUR FORESTS...  
...NOR THE ONE THAT TOOK PLACE HERE.



HERE?

I DON'T UNDERSTAND.

WHILE I WAS AWAY, COURAGING AFTER HART AND BOAR, I HAD OUR COURT OFFICERS CONDUCT THE **TRUE** HUNT, IN WHICH THEY FERRETED OUT YOUR MANY INFIDELITIES.

I NEVER!

DON'T LIE TO ME ANYMORE, FALSE QUEEN. BEFORE I HAD ONLY SUSPICIONS, BUT NOW I'VE UNIMPEACHABLE **PROOF**.

"EVEN NOW YOUR CONFESED LOVER'S **HEAD** IS THIRTY PACES FROM ITS FORMER CONVEYANCE."

AND WHAT WILL YOU DO TO ME?

EVEN NOW WE REMAIN FOND ENOUGH OF YOU TO GRANT MERCY. WE'LL GIVE YOU A **CHOICE** OF PUNISHMENTS.







EITHER TWENTY LASHES IN THE PUBLIC SQUARE...

OH.

...OR ELSE LEARN FROM MY HAND A VALUABLE LESSON ABOUT YOUR CRIMES.

I'VE NO TOLERANCE FOR PAIN. I'LL TAKE THE LESSON.



IN THE GREAT KINGDOMS THE LAND'S MAGIC WAS INVESTED IN ITS KING OR QUEEN, TO USE AS NEEDED FOR THE GOOD OF ALL.

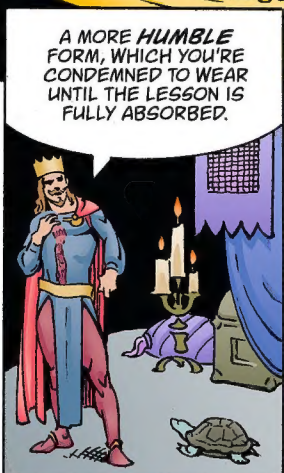


TOO BAD, THEN. YOU SHOULD HAVE CHOSEN THE LASHES. ACQUIRING TRUE WISDOM IS ALWAYS A GREATER BURDEN THAN TRANSIENT PAIN.

NEVER-THE-LESS...



WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO ME?



A MORE HUMBLE FORM, WHICH YOU'RE CONDEMNED TO WEAR UNTIL THE LESSON IS FULLY ABSORBED.



BUT I CAN'T LIVE AS A BEAST, FOR THEY HAVE NO SOULS! THIS IS TOO TERRIBLE A PRICE!



I WOULD NEVER DEPRIVE YOU OF YOUR SOUL, EVEN IN ITS PRESENT SORRY CONDITION.



HERE.



YOUR SOUL SITS **ALSO** TRANSFORMED--  
FRAGILE AND IN CONSTANT JEOPARDY ABOVE  
YOU, AS IT ALWAYS WAS. LET IT FALL OR  
BREAK, AND YOU LOSE IT  
FOREVER.

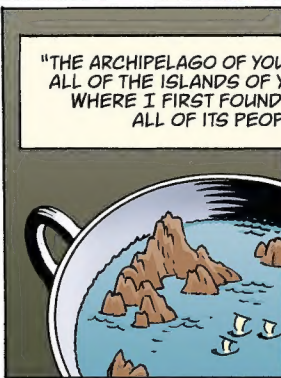


A CUP OF  
DELICATE  
CERAMIC?

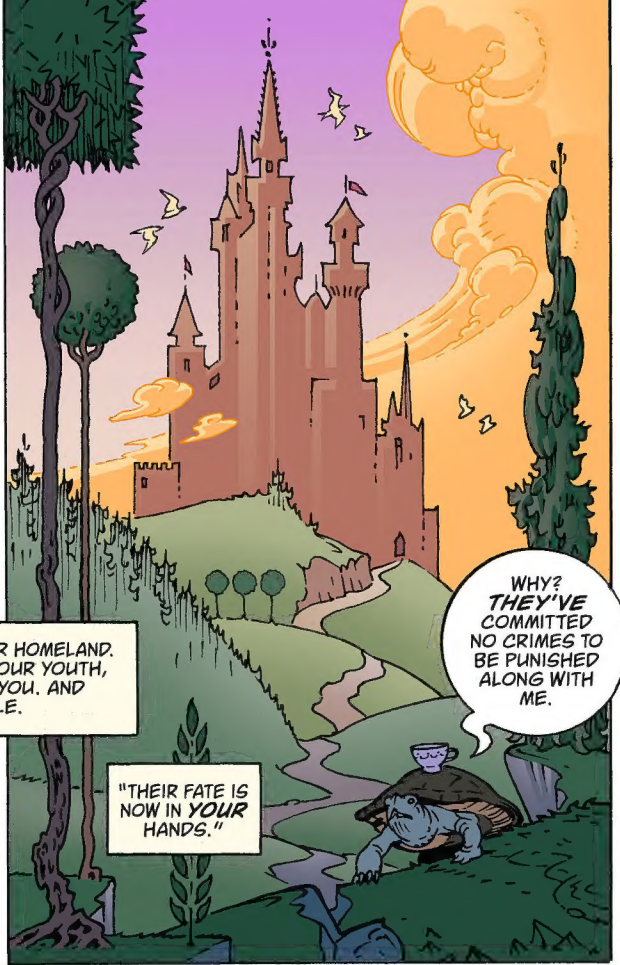
EVEN  
SO.

AND  
WHAT'S  
IN IT,  
FOR I  
CAN FEEL  
MORE  
WEIGHT  
THAN THE  
CUP  
ITSELF?  
WHAT  
**ELSE**  
DO I  
CARRY?

"THE ARCHIPELAGO OF YOUR HOMELAND.  
ALL OF THE ISLANDS OF YOUR YOUTH,  
WHERE I FIRST FOUND YOU. AND  
ALL OF ITS PEOPLE.



"THEIR FATE IS  
NOW IN **YOUR**  
HANDS."

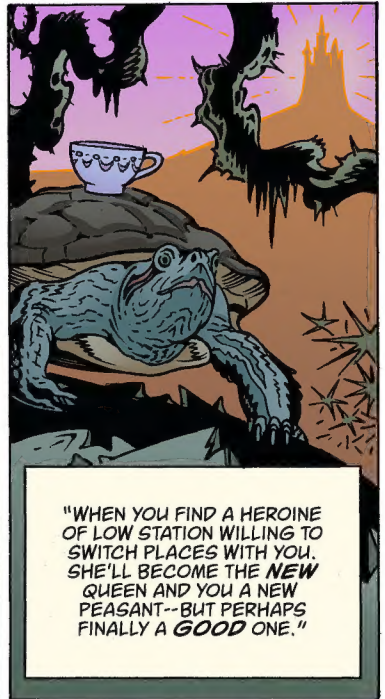


WHY?  
**THEY'VE**  
COMMITTED  
NO CRIMES TO  
BE PUNISHED  
ALONG WITH  
ME.

"NO, BUT YOU ARE THEIR QUEEN, PUTTING THEIR FATE IN **YOUR** HANDS.  
THIS IS THE LESSON YOU MUST LEARN. THE SINS OF GREAT PERSONAGES  
HAVE **DIRE** CONSEQUENCES FOR THE INNOCENT."

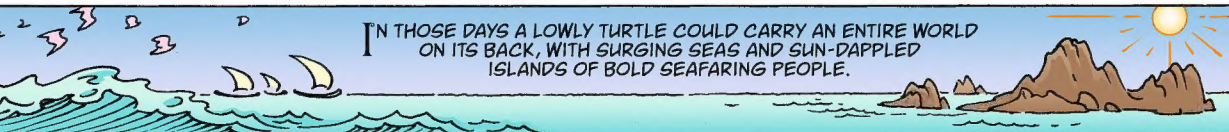


AND  
WHEN  
WILL THIS  
HORRIBLE  
TRIAL  
END?



"WHEN YOU FIND A HEROINE  
OF LOW STATION WILLING TO  
SWITCH PLACES WITH YOU.  
SHE'LL BECOME THE **NEW**  
QUEEN AND YOU A NEW  
PEASANT--BUT PERHAPS  
FINALLY A **GOOD** ONE."

IN THOSE DAYS A LOWLY TURTLE COULD CARRY AN ENTIRE WORLD  
ON ITS BACK, WITH SURGING SEAS AND SUN-DAPPLED  
ISLANDS OF BOLD SEAFARING PEOPLE.

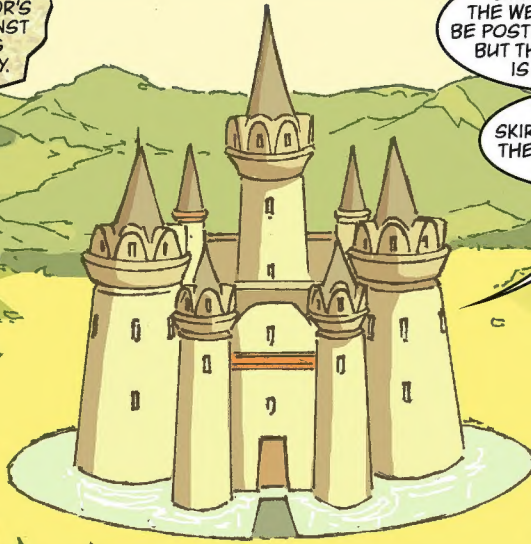




IN THOSE DAYS THE EMPEROR'S WARS OF CONQUEST AGAINST HIS NEAREST NEIGHBORING WORLDS WAS WELL UNDER WAY.

I'M SORRY THAT THE WEDDING HAS TO BE POSTPONED, DARLING. BUT THE **INVASION** IS IMMINENT.

THEIR ADVANCE SKIRMISHERS CROSSED THE WEG RIVER LAST NIGHT.



# A Magic Life

Zander  
Canon  
layouts

Jim  
Fern  
finishes

YOUR FATHER'S ARMY CAN'T HOPE TO MATCH THEIRS, SO I INTEND TO **SETTLE** THE MATTER IN SINGLE COMBAT.

YOU'LL **DIE!** I'M TOLD THE EMPEROR IS A GIANT! A MONSTER!



NONSENSE, MY LOVE.

I'M THE GREATEST SORCERER IN THE WORLD. HOW **ELSE** COULD I HAVE WON YOUR HAND, WHEN YOUR KNIGHTED SUITORS COULD FILL THE BREADTH OF AVON VALLEY?



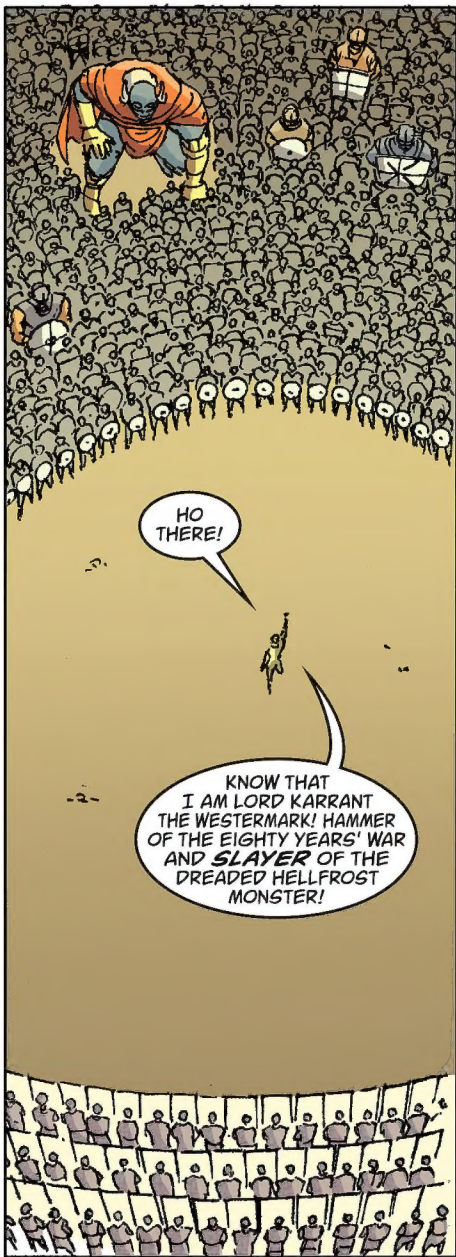




THE SORCERER KARRANT WAS TRULY RENOWNED THROUGHOUT THE WORLD'S NINE KINGDOMS. NO ADVERSARY COULD STAND AGAINST HIM.

ENJOY THE SPECTACLE, MEN.

BUT PAY CLOSE ATTENTION. I INTEND TO MAKE SHORT WORK OF HIM.



HO THERE!

KNOW THAT I AM LORD KARRANT THE WESTERMARK! HAMMER OF THE EIGHTY YEARS' WAR AND *SLAYER* OF THE DREADED HELLFROST MONSTER!



SHOW ME THIS LEADER OF YOURS SO THAT I MIGHT CHASTISE HIM!

IF HE'S NOT COWERING BEHIND HIS TROOPS, THEN I PROPOSE TO DO THIS AS A CONTEST OF CHAMPIONS--ME AGAINST HIM!

HE'S RUMORED TO BE MIGHTY! LET'S SEE IF IT'S SO!



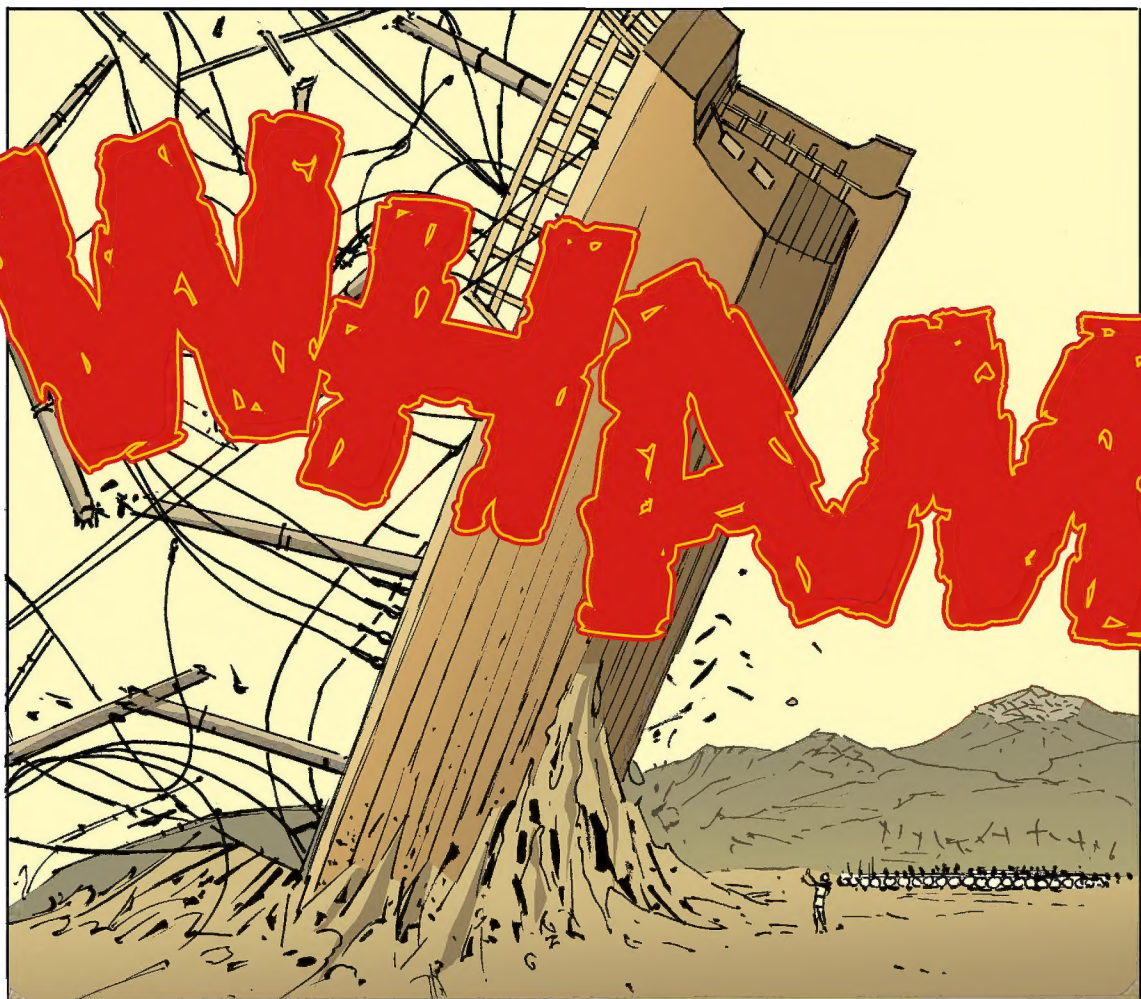
CEASE YOUR BUZZING, INSECT. WE'RE HAPPY TO FIGHT YOU IN SINGLE COMBAT. KILL ME AND THIS WORLD IS SAVED. MY HORDES WILL PASS IT BY FOR ALL TIME.

DIE, THOUGH, AND WE'LL RAZE THIS LAND, LEAVING NONE ALIVE AND NO STONE STANDING ON ANOTHER.

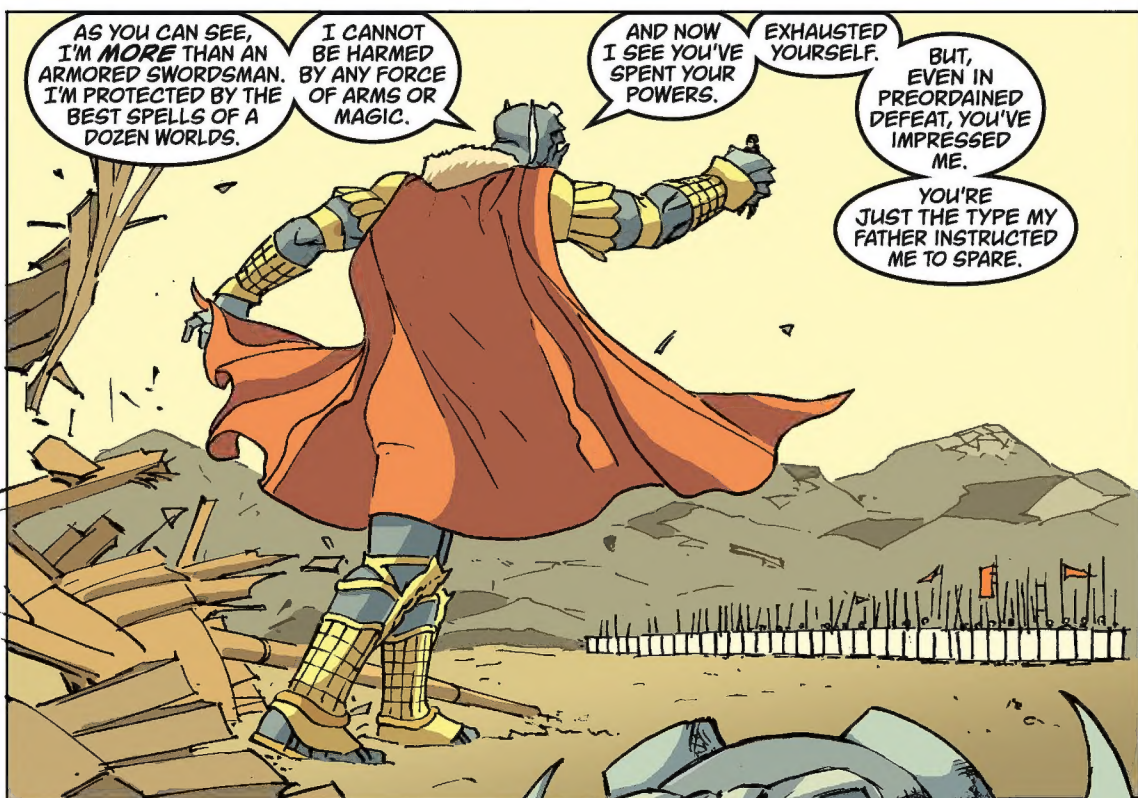




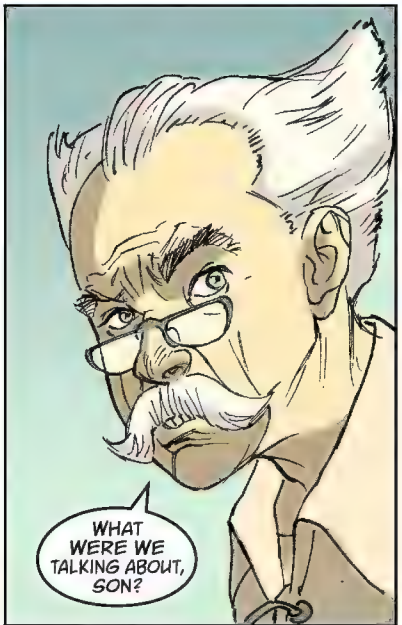
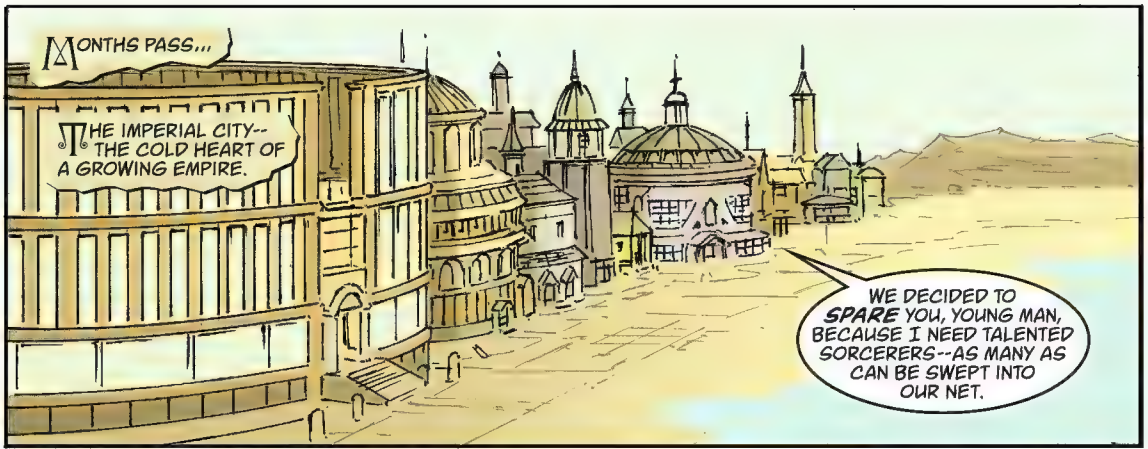














AND SO IT WAS. NO LAND WHEREIN THE TALENTED MAGICIAN DWELLED STIRRED THE OLD MAN'S INTEREST.

TRULY THEY DESTROYED EVERYTHING.

SOMEDAY THAT EVIL OLD CREATURE AND HIS TAME GIANT WILL BE MADE TO PAY.



BUT NO VENGEANCE WAS EVER EXACTED. THE CONJURER'S SPELL WORKED TOO WIDELY AND TOO WELL. IN TIME HE FORGOT ABOUT HIS ENEMIES AS THEY FORGOT HIM.

HELP YOU FIGHT THE INVADERS?



FEEDBACK FROM THEIR MANY DEFENSES, PERHAPS?

WHY SHOULD I?

WHAT HARM HAVE THEY EVER DONE ME?



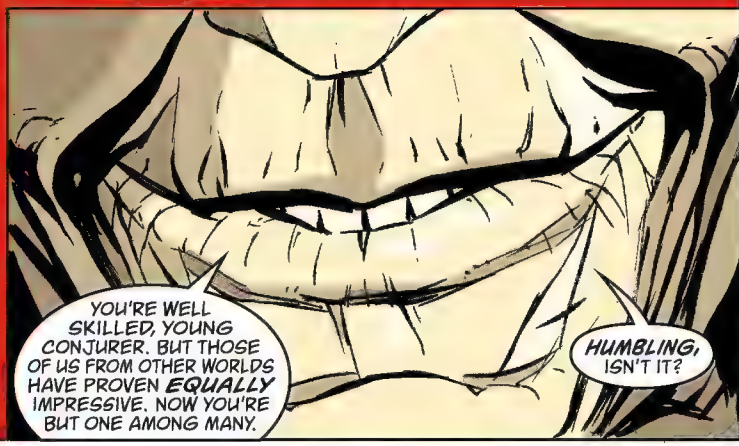
THE MAN WANDERED FROM WORLD TO WORLD, EVENTUALLY FINDING A SMALL, OUT-OF-THE-WAY PLACE.

THIS TINY WORLD IS NEARLY BEREFT OF MAGIC. I'LL BE EVEN MORE POWERFUL HERE.



YOU'RE WELL SKILLED, YOUNG CONJURER. BUT THOSE OF US FROM OTHER WORLDS HAVE PROVEN EQUALLY IMPRESSIVE. NOW YOU'RE BUT ONE AMONG MANY.

HUMBLING, ISN'T IT?



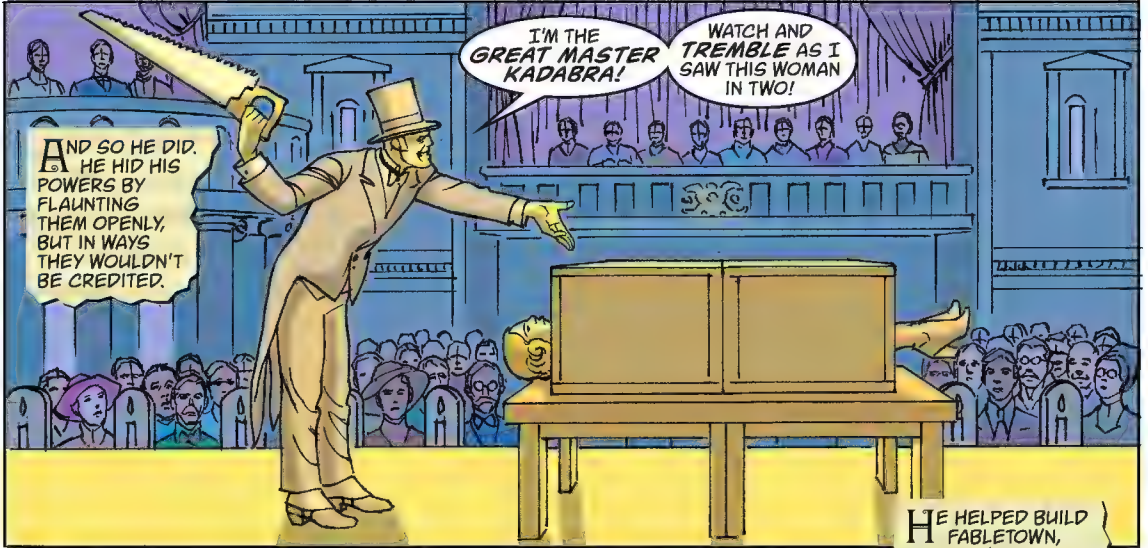




AND IN THIS PLACE WE'VE DECIDED TO HIDE OUR GIFTS.

LEARN TO MASK YOURS, SIR.

I ADVISE IT.

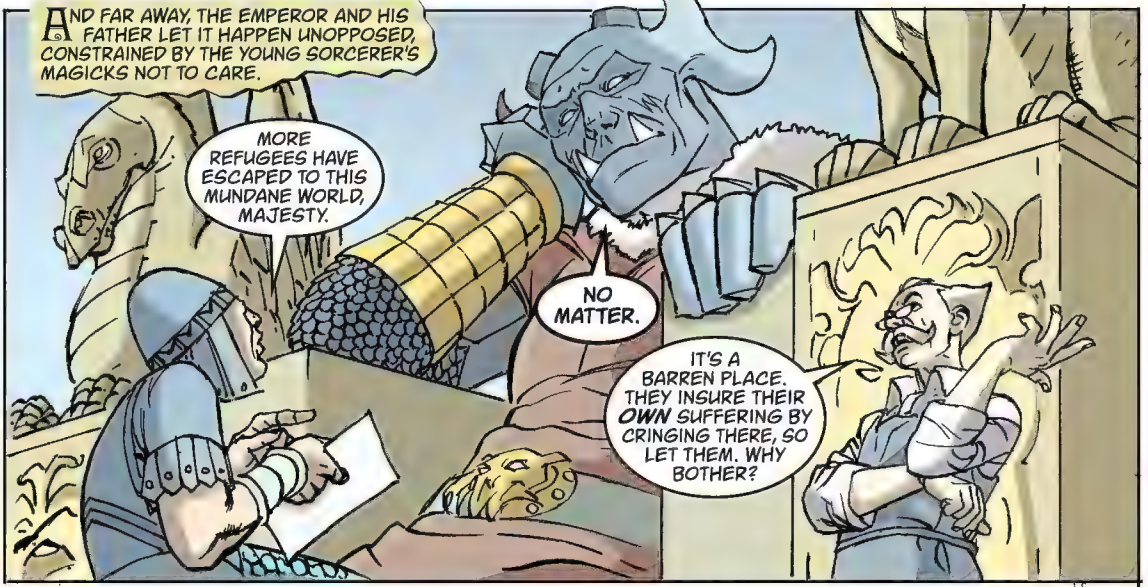
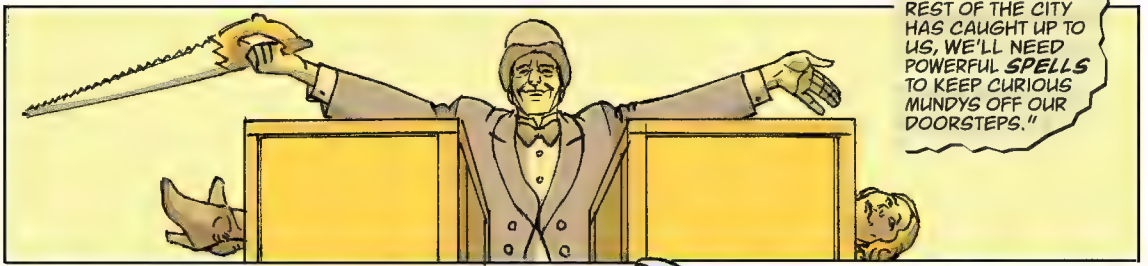


AND SO HE DID. HE HID HIS POWERS BY FLAUNTING THEM OPENLY, BUT IN WAYS THEY WOULDN'T BE CREDITED.

I'M THE GREAT MASTER KADABRA!

WATCH AND TREMBLE AS I SAW THIS WOMAN IN TWO!

HE HELPED BUILD FABLETOWN, SAYING, "SINCE THE REST OF THE CITY HAS CAUGHT UP TO US, WE'LL NEED POWERFUL SPELLS TO KEEP CURIOUS MUNDYS OFF OUR DOORSTEPS."



AND FAR AWAY, THE EMPEROR AND HIS FATHER LET IT HAPPEN UNOPPOSED, CONSTRAINED BY THE YOUNG SORCERER'S MAGICKS NOT TO CARE.

MORE REFUGEES HAVE ESCAPED TO THIS MUNDANE WORLD, MAJESTY.

NO MATTER.

IT'S A BARREN PLACE. THEY INSURE THEIR OWN SUFFERING BY CRINGING THERE, SO LET THEM. WHY BOTHER?





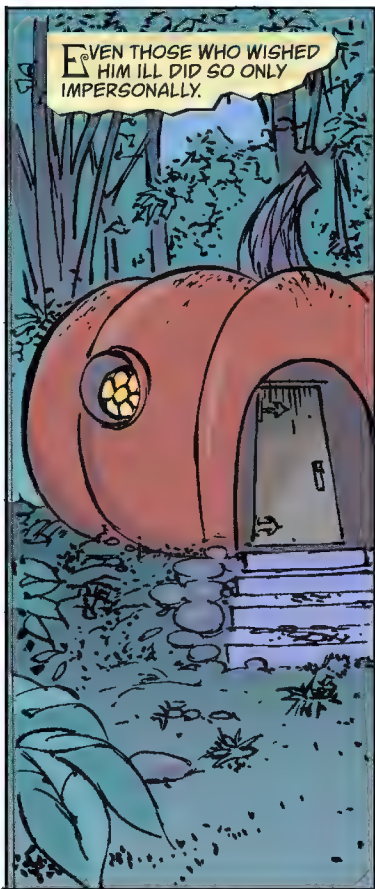
A VICTIM OF HIS OWN POWERS, THE NEWLY RECHRISTENED MISTER KADABRA NEVER KNEW HIS ROLE IN PROTECTING SO MANY FOR SO LONG. NOR DID ANY OF HIS PEERS.

HE'S TALENTED IN HIS WAY, BUT **HARDLY** TOP TIER.



DID HIS GREAT SPELL BEGIN TO LEAK SO BADLY OVER THE AGES, CAUSING OTHERS TO DISMISS HIM?

A FOLLOWER AT BEST. WE CAN LEAVE HIM OUT OF CONSIDERATION WHILE CHOOSING OUR **NEXT** LEADER.



EVEN THOSE WHO WISHED HIM ILL DID SO ONLY IMPERSONALLY.



HIS EVENTUAL KILLER DIDN'T NEED ANYONE SPECIFIC DEAD.

WHAT NOW?

YOU'LL DO.



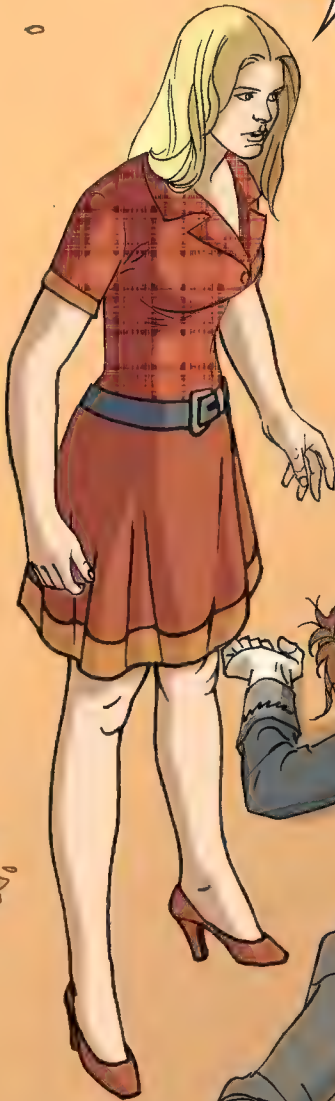
SHE JUST NEEDED ANY OLD FABLE MURDERED--SOMEONE TO LURE HER ARCHENEMY BACK INTO THEIR AGES-OLD CONFLICT.

...STABBED A FEW TIMES AND BADLY BEATEN. NOT SURE WHY, OR BY WHO.

I DO. IT'S A MESSAGE TO ME FROM AN OLD FRIEND.

YOU KEEP SOME NASTY FRIENDS, CINDY.

YOU KNOW WHAT THEY SAY--BEST FRIENDS MAKE THE WORST ENEMIES.



SO THAT'S THE UNHAPPY TALE OF THE SORCERER KADABRA, MORE POWERFUL THAN ANYONE SUSPECTED. HE KEPT ALL OF FABLETOWN SAFE FROM THE EMPIRE FOR SO MANY YEARS, THOUGH NO ONE EVER KNEW IT, NOT EVEN THE MAN HIMSELF.

BUT IS HIS STORY OVER? ONE MIGHT REASONABLY ASSUME SO, EXCEPT THAT THESE WITCHY TYPES HAVE SUCH A BAD HABIT OF NOT STAYING DEAD...



# The Way of the Worlds

Hamon  
Baehs  
penciller  
Ron  
Randall  
inker

IN THOSE DAYS, A WORLD COULD BE VAST,  
WITHOUT END, OR SMALL ENOUGH TO FIT  
ON THE HEAD OF A PIN.

WHERE ARE  
WE FISHING TODAY,  
FATHER?

NO FISH  
TODAY, SON. IT'S  
**TIME**. TODAY IS WHEN  
A BOY TAKES HIS STEP  
INTO MANHOOD.

IT COULD BE ROUND OR  
SQUARE, OR WRAPPED  
AROUND A BALL THAT  
FLOATS IN EMPTY AIR.

OH! ARE  
WE--?

WE'LL SAIL TO  
THE EDGE OF THE WORLD  
TODAY, WHERE YOU'LL PLACE  
YOUR HANDS AGAINST THE  
**WALL** AND SPEAK THE  
WORDS.

OR IT COULD BE A COZY THING  
SURROUNDED BY WALLS A  
THOUSAND LEAGUES HIGH.

THEN YOU'LL  
HAVE ALL THE **RIGHTS**  
OF OUR PEOPLE. YOU CAN  
ACQUIRE YOUR OWN BOAT,  
BUY AND SELL IN THE MARKET,  
AND EVEN TAKE A **WIFE**, IF  
YOU'VE A MIND TO.





IN THOSE DAYS FIERCE  
BUCCANEERS COURSED  
THE BLUE WATERS IN  
SLEEK SHIPS.

HEAVE TO, AND  
GIVE **OVER** YOUR  
TREASURES!

AND YOUR  
**LIVES** TOO, IF  
WE'VE A WHIM TO  
TAKE THEM!



NOT TODAY!

TODAY MY **SON** SPEAKS HIS **WORDS** AT THE WALL OF THE WORLD, AND I THEREFORE CLAIM OUR ANCIENT **RIGHT** OF SAFE PASSAGE!

LET THEM GO.

BUT CAP'N!

THE ANCIENT LAWS HAVE STOOD FOR TEN THOUSAND YEARS. WE'LL **NOT** BE THE ONES TO BREAK THEM.

YOU'VE SEEN YOUR FIRST **PIRATE** SON. YOU'LL NEED TO BE WARY OF THEM IN THE FAR WATERS BEYOND OUR BAY.

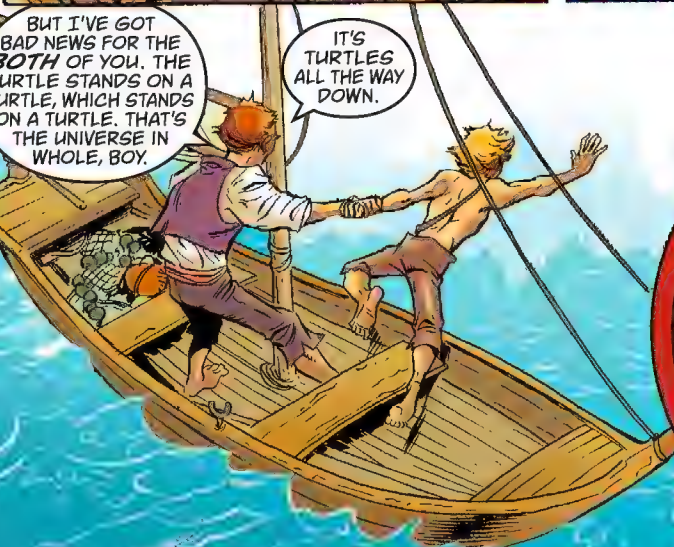
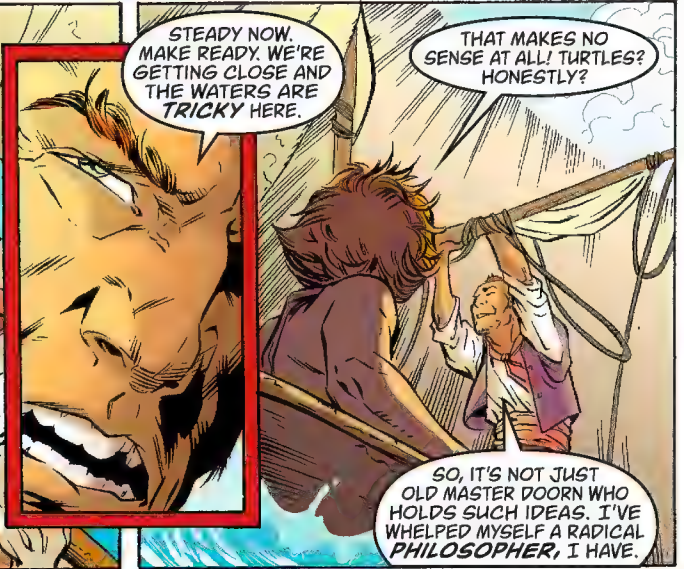
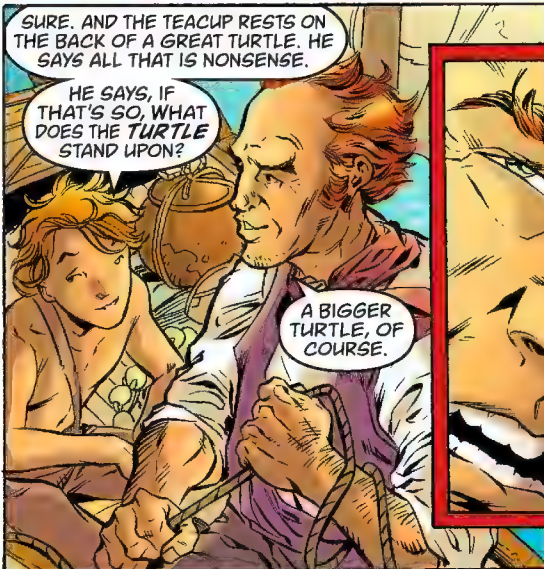
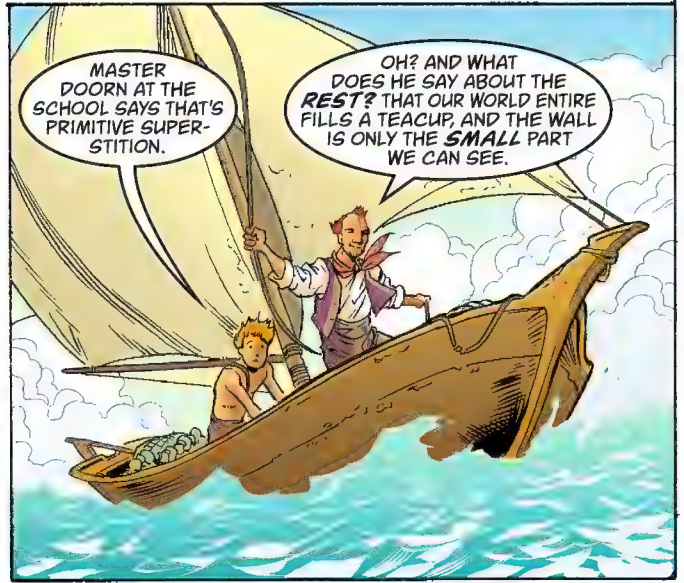
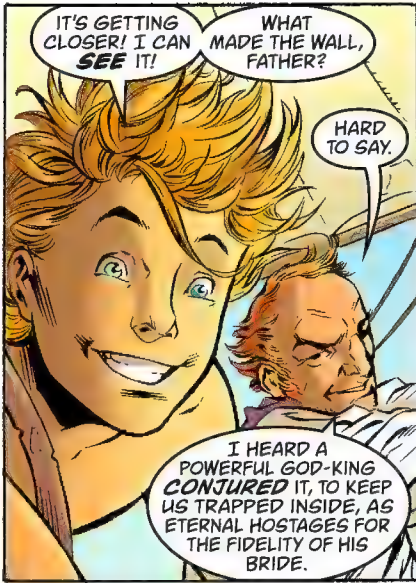
OR I COULD PURCHASE LETTERS OF MARQUE, TO **HUNT** THEM DOWN AND TAKE THEIR SHIPS FOR MY OWN!

I'VE THE RIGHT NOW, DON'T I?

SURE, IF YOU'VE A **FORTUNE** STASHED AWAY YOUR MOTHER AND I NEVER SUSPECTED. THE KING'S LETTERS COST DEAR, AND YOU'LL HUNT NO BRIGANDS IN A FISHING SLOOP.

AND YOU DON'T **HAVE** THE RIGHT. NOT YET. YOU NEED TO TOUCH THE WALL FIRST.







# In Those Days ...

...SOME OF THE MORE GIFTED POWERS IN THE LAND WERE LIKELY TO TAKE OFFENSE AT THE SLIGHTEST PROVOCATION.

OUCH!

YOU DID THAT ON PURPOSE!

NO WAY, LADY!

WHO JUST STICKS HER HAND INTO A STRAWBERRY BUSH WITHOUT FIRST CHECKING TO SEE IF SOMEONE WAS *THERE* FIRST?

# PORKY PINNING

Adam Hughes artist and colors

OH, I SEE. IT'S ONE OF YOU *HUMANS*. TOO ENTITLED TO WAIT YOUR TURN.

YOU'RE ALL SO MAD AT THE GODS FOR MAKING YOUR SPECIES SO *UGLY*. YOU ASSUME THE WORLD *OWES* YOU EVERYTHING YOU WANT BY WAY OF COMPENSATION.

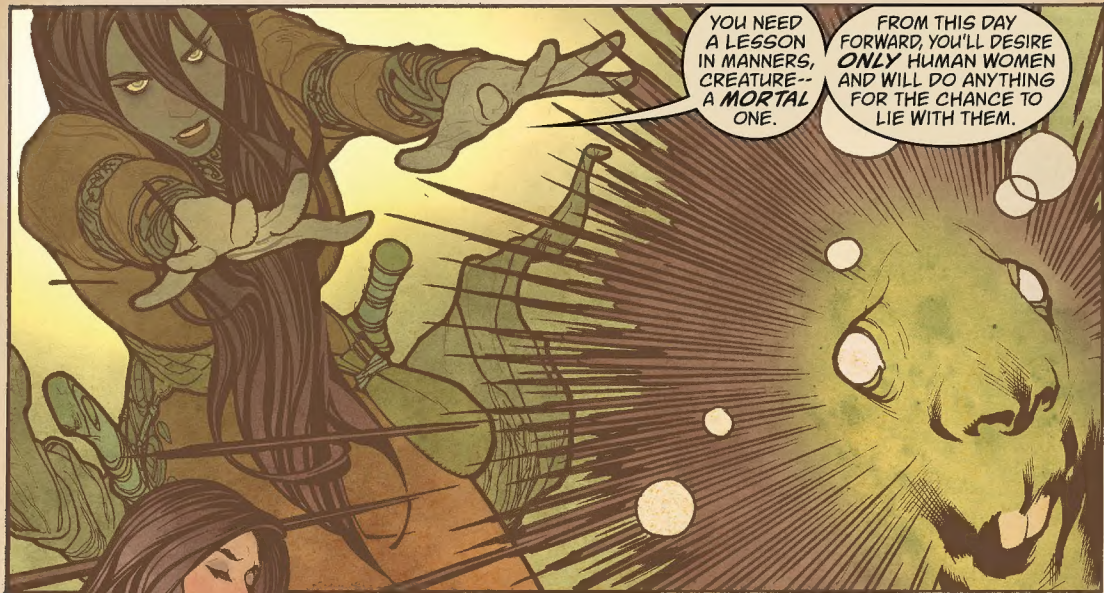
UGLY?

I HAPPEN TO BE ONE OF THE MOST *DESIRABLE* WOMEN IN THE LAND.

SURE. BELIEVE *THAT*, IF IT MAKES YOU HAPPY.







YOU NEED  
A LESSON  
IN MANNERS,  
CREATURE--  
A MORTAL  
ONE.

FROM THIS DAY  
FORWARD, YOU'LL DESIRE  
**ONLY** HUMAN WOMEN  
AND WILL DO ANYTHING  
FOR THE CHANCE TO  
LIE WITH THEM.



THERE. *THAT*  
SHOULD GET YOU  
KILLED SOON  
ENOUGH.

EVEN A LOWLY  
PORKY PINE SHOULD  
KNOW BETTER THAN TO  
ANGER A WOMAN OF  
THE CRAFT.

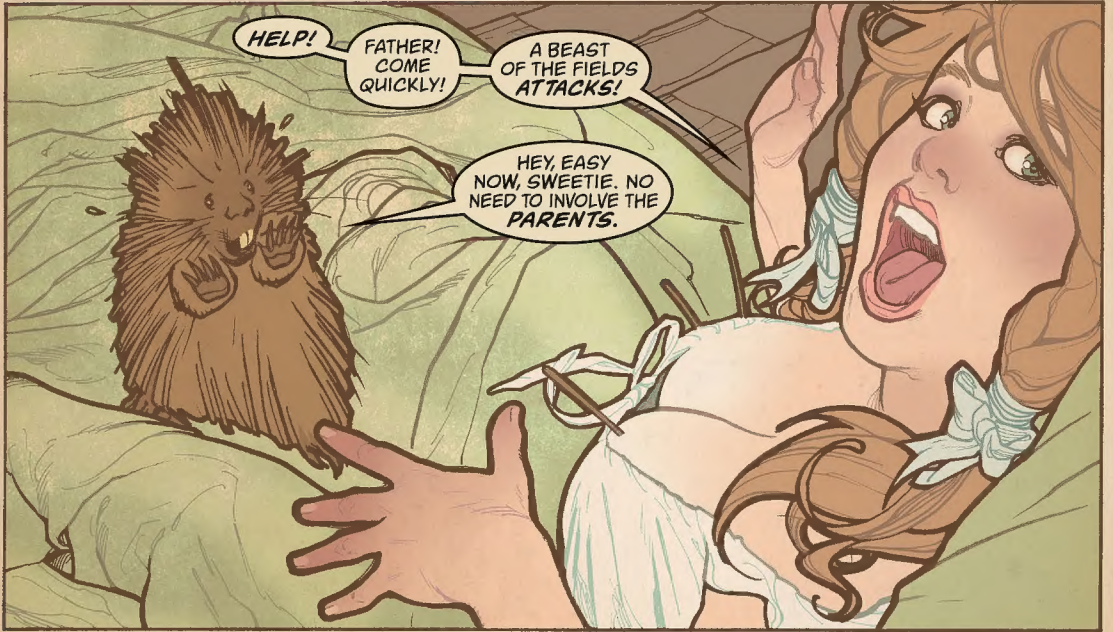
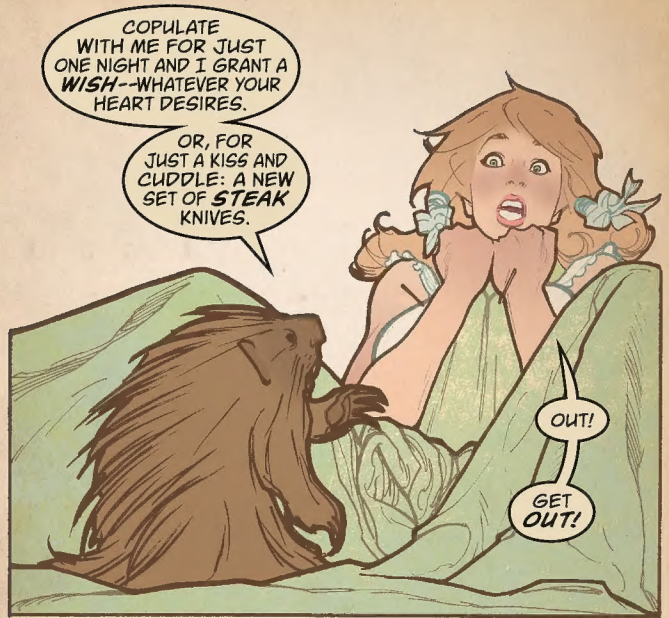
HEY,  
WAIT! COME  
BACK!



ON SECOND  
GLANCE, YOU DON'T  
LOOK SO BAD.

FROM THAT DAY FORWARD  
THE PORKY PINE SOUGHT  
OUT THE INTIMATE COMPANY  
OF MAIDENS FAIR.





AND SO IT WENT IN THOSE DAYS...



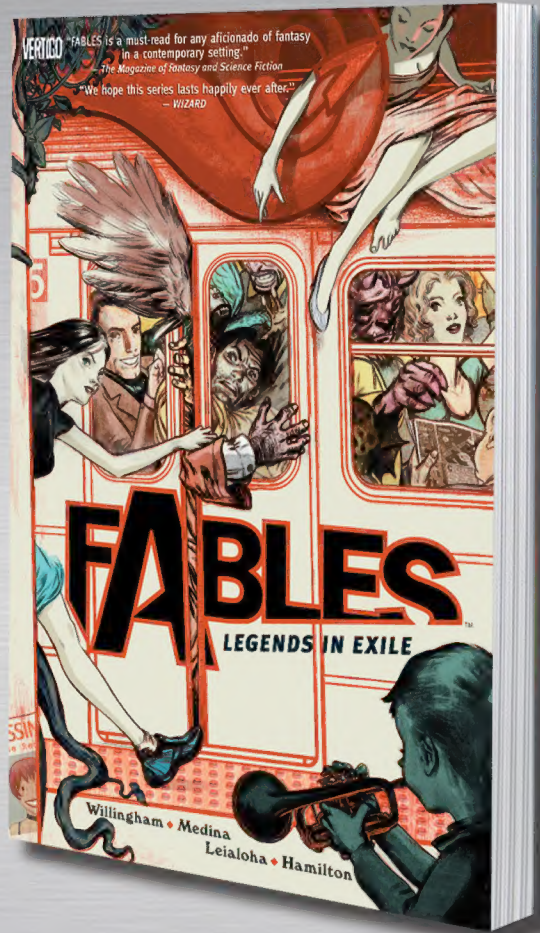
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# BILL WILLINGHAM

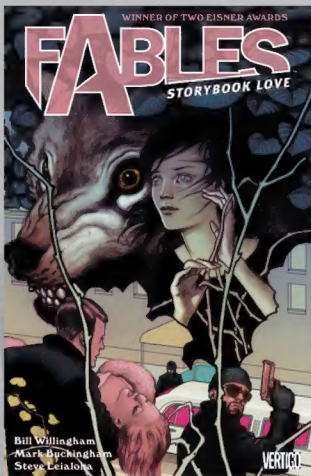
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– THE WASHINGTON POST



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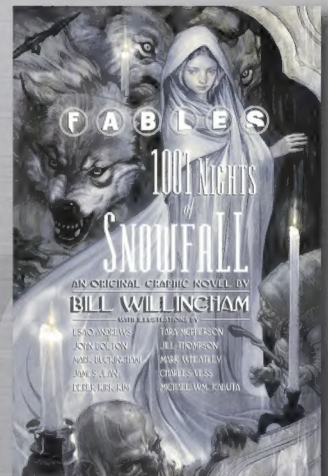
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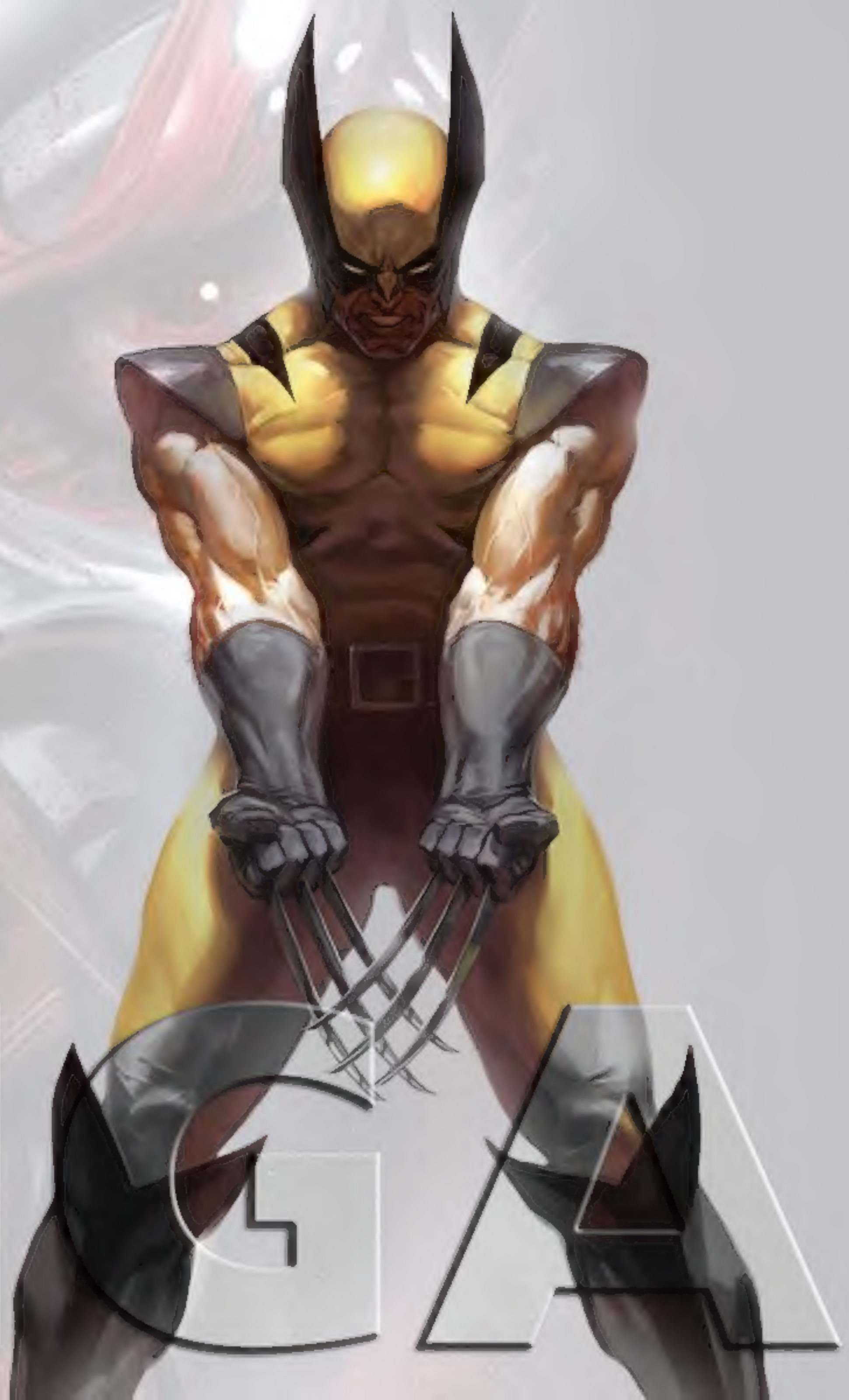
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NATHAN